

## **Minutes of the LRA meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023 in the LMC at 7.30pm**

**Attendees:** \_Caroline Brown (Chairman), Martyn Williams (Director), Louise Herrity (Director), Paula Sabine (Director), Ray Brown, Tony Russell, Hilary Porter, Bill Whitman, Jill Whitman, Margaret Sims, Lesley Pearce, Diana Carr, Judith Hilvert, Pam Wilson, John Wilson, Bernard Salisbury, Maureen Conrad, David Woodhead, Alison Houslander, Eileen Walton, Keith Walton, Helen Tribe, Evelyn Stanley, Phil Stanley, Chris Goddard, Marie Goddard, Vicky Wallace, Councillors Joanna Slater and Keira Vyvyan-Robinson.

**Apologies received from:** Councillors Moss, Brinker and Hall, also from Julia Jarrett, Andi Ryan, Geoffrey West and Fran Smith.

The meeting opened with a welcome to all from the Chairman. Ashe also thanked those members who had recently made donations to the LRA. She then moved to the content of her report (full version online).

1. Banking hub: The necessity for this has only increased as one after another of the banks in the town close and is now even more necessary with the demise of HSBC being planned for early July. MVDC Economic Development Officers have started to assemble a Bid for a North Mole Valley Banking Hub to be located in Leatherhead.

2. Town presentation: It is important that new, colourful, well maintained planters in the High Street replace the existing dilapidated versions. Cllr. Vyvyan-Robinson has sourced these items plus the finance, but, sadly, there are other priorities holding them up. KV-R said she would ask the MVDC CEO to push Surrey CC for early progress in this regard.

Paula Sabine asked why the planters are being renewed, when they were only installed as a Covid precaution. KV-R responded that a consultation had established that the restaurants favoured their retention, (albeit a lesser number), to protect pavement seating areas.

It is also hoped that the Plough Roundabout could be improved in a similar way and there is even someone prepared to maintain them, but there are legal difficulties in carrying out the work given the extremely busy nature of the surrounding road.

The repair of the town clock can be financed and CB is to ascertain the owner of the buildings to which it is attached so as to plan how best to carry out the repairs.

A Planning application to redevelop the former Building Supplies premises has been made and hopefully this will result in the renewal of this very dilapidated building. The upper floor windows of the Santander building have at last been closed, although much of the roof remains without tiles.

3. CB then asked Martyn Williams to report on the recent consultation meeting he had attended regarding the proposed Riverside Park.

MW said the area of consideration stretches from Waterway Road to Vicarage Lane. Approx 20 consultees were present, and they were asked to form four teams to consider what form the park should take. The strong consensus was that the area was a precious wild-life habitat and that any development should not adversely affect this.

There were a number of comments from members supporting these views and MW undertook to feed these comments back to the consultants. KV-R confirmed that a number of other consultations are taking place with other interested groups.

4. Additional, smaller items: a) The meeting was asked whether it agreed with the motion to be put to the Council later this month asking for the Public Spaces Protection Order in the Kingston Road Recreation Ground to be extended for another 3 years. There was no disagreement over this and people were asked to confirm their choice online before 14 Feb. b) The Chairman told the meeting that Lidl had been written to regarding the lack of a lift. The writer felt that the situation was extremely prejudicial for some customers. c) The Fairfield Centre has indicated that it would like more members. d) The LRA Spring Litter-Pick will take place AT 14.00 on Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> April, based in the Randalls Road car park where equipment can be borrowed. But members are welcome to do a Litter-Pick at their own convenience and just bring the results to the car park.

5. I would now like to bring you up to date as regards the draft local plan and I will ask Martyn Williams to summarise the latest position.

MW commented that, because of a change in government policy at the end of last year, our council believes it is in a position to amend the current draft plan by removing nearly all the Green Belt sites previously proposed for housing development. This reduces the total housing numbers by approx. 25%. The Council have asked the Inspector whether she will consider this change an acceptable modification to the plan and resume her consideration of it in its amended form. A response is awaited.

MW pointed out that, unfortunately, this amendment has little effect on the housing numbers that Leatherhead is required to provide as there was only one small Green Belt site proposed. As other centres' totals have declined more markedly, the proportion of the district total that Leatherhead will have to provide has, therefore, increased from approx. 30% to around 40% (some say nearly 50%)

6. Finally, regarding the need of the Ashlea Medical Practice for more accommodation, the Chairman asked Tony Russell to give a summary of work achieved so far.

Tony reported that a small committee had been formed with various areas of expertise and that the committee hoped to be given a tour of the present building shortly to assess the problem for themselves. KV-R confirmed that strategic CIL finance may be available, but the application process is rigorous and decisions are only made once a year.

7. The Chairman then announced that in light of her advancing years she really cannot postpone her long-standing wish to retire from the Chairmanship of the LRA any longer. A volunteer or volunteers to take her place could be initiated into the position over the coming year, but she will resign in October of this year and, unless a successor is found, the LRA will have to be wound up.

8. The Chairman then confirmed that the next meeting will be in May, probably the 15<sup>th</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup>. More information will appear in the monthly bulletins. She thanked all those present for their attendance and pronounced the meeting closed.